



Louis H. Bruni
County Judge

1000 Houston St. 3rd Floor
Laredo, Texas 78040

(956) 523-4600
Fax (956) 523-5065

WEBB COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Raul Casso
(956) 523-4600

WEBB COUNTY OFFICIALS SCRAMBLE TO MAINTAIN IMPORTANT SERVICES IN FACE OF STATE BUDGET CUTS

LAREDO – Less than 24 hours after the 78th Texas Legislature finished its business Monday, Webb County officials began assessing how cuts in the final \$117 billion state budget will impact the county and the families it serves.

“In light of the \$10 billion budget cuts coming out of Austin, leaders of Webb County and the families we serve are facing some difficult times ahead,” said Webb County Judge Louis Bruni. “Even though our county will receive significantly less support from our state and federal governments, it doesn’t mean people will stop getting sick, needing shots or having babies.”

“As county officials, we have an obligation to take care of families who have fallen on hard times, especially when it comes to keeping them healthy,” said Bruni. “That obligation doesn’t end just because much of our funding has disappeared.”

While analysts are still scouring the massive budget bill, which passed in the closing hours of the legislative session, Webb County expects to lose more than \$50 million in CHIP and Medicaid cuts, programs that provide health coverage to more than 5,000 low-income children and families.

Other Webb County officials echoed Bruni’s concerns.

“Not only are we facing severe cuts in health care services, but we also expect to take hits in the areas of public safety and criminal justice, among others,” said Webb County

Commissioner Judith Gutierrez. “This means that Webb County must look for other sources of revenue, not just in the immediate future, but also for the long term to ensure that our ability to serve local families doesn’t rise and fall according to what comes out of the Texas Legislature.”

Commissioner Jerry Vasquez added, “While we wish there was a never-ending stream of state and federal funding flowing into Webb County, that simply is not going to be the case. Our Commissioners’ Court is going to have to make some tough decisions in the coming months to balance needed services with the need to keep our local property tax rates reasonable.”

Judge Bruni and the commissioners praised Webb County’s Senator Judith Zaffirini for her leadership in preventing budget cuts from being worse. But they acknowledged that given the very difficult financial situation the state faced, budget cuts that hurt counties were inevitable.

“This situation is further proof that if we want to continue to provide vital services to our community without raising taxes on hard-working families, Webb County must find other, long-term sources of revenue – like a fifth international bridge – that can provide stability when other funding sources dry up,” said Bruni.

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